

Back to school safety tips

An estimated 2.2 million children ages 14 and under sustain school related injuries each year.

Accidents can be prevented if parents are on the lookout for potential hazards.

Backpacks

- Choose a backpack with wide, padded shoulder straps and a padded back. Your child's backpack should not be wider than his body.
- Pack light. Organize the backpack to use all of its compartments. Pack heavier items closest to the center of the pack. The backpack should never weigh more than 10 to 20 percent of your child's body weight.
- Make sure your child is not toting unnecessary items. Laptops, CD players and video games can add a lot of pounds to a backpack.
- Always use both shoulder straps. Slinging a back pack over one shoulder can strain muscles.
- Consider a rolling backpack. This type of backpack may be a good choice for students who must tote a heavy load. Remember that rolling

backpacks still must be carried up stairs, and they may be difficult to roll in snow.

- Picking up a backpack properly is important. As with any heavy object, your child should bend at the knees and grab the pack with both hands when lifting it to his shoulders.

Drawstrings on jackets and sweatshirts

Drawstrings on sweatshirts and jackets may present a strangulation hazard and should not be present on hoods or around the neck and waist area. Remove drawstrings from all children's outerwear to avoid strangulation by catching in car and school bus doors and hand rails, or getting caught on playground equipment.

Helmets

Buy a helmet that has a label stating it meets mandatory safety standards (U.S., CPSC, Snell, ANSI, ASTM) insist that your children wear the helmet each time they ride their bike or scooter.

Children under the age of 12 should not ride motorized scooters, according to the recommendations from the U.S.

Consumer Product Safety Commission.

When riding a scooter it is recommended to wear elbow and knee pads. Research indicates that a helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by up to 85 percent and reduce the risk of brain injury.

Make sure children remove bike helmets before using any playground equipment.

Playgrounds

Check the playgrounds where your children play. Look for age-appropriate equipment and hazards such as rusted or broken equipment and dangerous surfaces. Report any hazards to the school or municipality.

Check the surfaces around playground equipment at schools and parks to make sure there is a 12-inch depth of wood chips, mulch, pea gravel, or mats made of safety-tested rubber or fiber material to prevent head injury when a child falls. Each year, more than 200,000 children go to U.S. hospital emergency rooms with injuries associated with playground equipment. Most injuries occur when a child falls from the equipment onto the ground. Tell them what

equipment is appropriate for their age levels.

Teach your children proper playground behavior: no pushing, shoving or crowding.

Sports

If your child is involved in a sports program, talk to the coordinator and coach to make sure the following are included: proper physical and psychological conditioning, appropriate safety equipment, a safe playing environment, adequate adult supervision, enforcement of safety rules, and an emergency medical plan.

Carry with you an emergency kit that includes any special medications or supplies that your child may need.

Make sure children playing sports are appropriately grouped according to skill level, weight and physical maturity, especially for contact sports. Getting hurt does not have to be “part of the game.”

Soccer goals

Soccer goals can fall over and cause injuries from hanging on the netting or on the crossbar, some of these injuries can be fatal. Make sure that the athletic director, school officials’ or the custodian anchor the soccer goals into the ground so that the soccer goal will not tip over and crush a child.

Emergency contacts

Be sure your child knows his or her home phone number and address, your work number, the number of another trusted adult

and how to call 911 for emergencies.

Walking to School

- Make sure your child’s walk to a school is a safe route with well-trained adult crossing guards at busy intersections.
- Be realistic about your child’s pedestrian skills. Because small children are impulsive and less cautious around traffic, carefully consider whether or not your child is ready to walk to school without adult supervision.
- If your child is young or is walking to a new school, walk with them the first week to make sure they know the route and can do it safely. Tell them to stay away from parks, vacant lots, fields and other places where there are not people around.
- Bright colored clothing will make your child more visible to drivers.

In neighborhoods with higher levels of traffic, consider starting a “walking school bus” in which an adult accompanies a group of neighborhood children walking to school.

Bike

If your child is old enough to safely ride their bike to and from school teach them to following safety rules:

- Always wear a bicycle helmet, no matter how short or long the ride.
- Ride on bike paths when available or in the same direction as auto traffic.

- Use appropriate hand signals.
- Respect traffic lights and stop signs.
- Wear bright colored clothing to increase visibility.
- Know the “rules of the road.”

Consider accompanying your child on their first few bike rides to and from school to ensure that they know the proper route to take and demonstrate good bicycle and traffic safety skills.

School bus

- Teach your children to arrive at the bus stop early, stay out of the street and avoid horseplay, wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before approaching the street, watch for cars and avoid the driver’s blind spot.
- Remind your children to stay seated at all times and keep their heads and arms inside the bus when riding.
- If your child’s school bus has lap/shoulder seat belts, make sure your child uses one at all times when in the bus. If your child’s school bus does not have lap/shoulder belts, encourage the school to buy or lease buses with lap/shoulder belts.
- When exiting the bus, children should remember to wait until the bus comes to a complete stop, exit from the front using the handrail to avoid falls, and cross the street at least 10 feet (or 10 giant steps) in front of the bus.

- Tell your child not to bend down in front of the bus to tie shoes or pick up objects, as the driver may not see him before starting to move.

Car

- When driving children, deliver and pick them up as close to the school as possible. Do not leave until they are in the schoolyard or building.
- Know and follow school drop off rules.
- All passengers should wear a seat belt and/or an age and size appropriate child safety seat or booster seat.
- All children under 13 years of age should ride in the rear seat of vehicles.
- Remember that many crashes occur while novice teen drivers are going to and from school. You should require seat belt use, limit the number of teen passengers, do not allow eating, drinking, cell phone conversations or texting to prevent driver distraction and limit nighttime driving and driving in inclement weather. Familiarize yourself with Wisconsin's graduated driver license law (www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/teens/gdlfaq.htm) and consider the use of parent-teen driver agreement to facilitate the early driving learning process.

Bullies

- Give your child some strategies for coping with bullies.

- They should not give in to a bully's demands, but should simply walk away or tell the bully to stop.
- Look the bully in the eye, stand tall, stay calm and say in a firm voice "Please do NOT talk to me like that." Or "I do not like what you are doing."
- If the bullying continues, alert school officials to the problems and work with them on solutions. If you see no changes, go to the police.
- Tell your child not to cheer or even quietly watch bullying but to tell a trusted adult.
- Teach your child when and how to ask for help.
- Encourage your child to make friends with other children.
- Support activities that interest your child.
- Monitor your child's social media or texting interactions so you can identify problems before they get out of hand.

Before and after school child care

- During middle school, youngsters need supervision. A responsible adult should be available to get them ready and off to school in the morning and watch over them after school until you return home from work.
- Children approaching adolescence (11 and 12 year olds) should not come home to an empty house in the afternoon unless they show unusual maturity for their age.

- If alternate adult supervision is not available, parents should make special efforts to supervise their children from a distance. Children should have a set time when they are expected to arrive at home and should check in with a neighbor or with a parent by telephone.
- Tell your children to keep all doors shut and locked at all times. If someone comes to the door, your child can communicate with this person through the door.
- If you choose a commercial after-school program, inquire about the training of the staff. There should be a high staff-to-child ratio, and the rooms and the playground should be safe.

Homework

Create a safe online environment that is conducive to doing homework and protects your child.

- Youngsters need a permanent work space in their bedroom or another part of the home that is quiet.
- Schedule ample time for homework.
- Be available to answer questions and offer assistance, but never do a child's homework for them.
- Establish a household rule that the TV set stays off during homework time.
- Use the Internet with your child to help develop safe surfing habits. Know what your child is downloading. All downloading

carries some risks. Do not do it, particularly if it is free.

- Warn your children not to give out personal identifying information such as full name, names of relatives, street address, cell and home telephone number, date of birth, Social Security number, ethnic background, photos, names of school teams, names of malls near your home, where you or your child work, schools you or your child have attended and family financial information. Explain to them minors make ideal targets for identity thieves.

Make certain you have good security software and that you update it frequently.

- Tell your child to be careful about responding to online requests. Such requests are particularly common in chat rooms, chain letters, blogs and surveys.
- Take steps to alleviate eye, neck and brain fatigue while studying. It may be helpful for your child to periodically stretch and take a break.
- Do not allow anyone else to share your computer or use your Internet access.
- Set rules about meeting online "friends" in public. Establish clearly that if a child is going to meet a person he or she only met on the Internet, it must be with your permission, in a very public place, and that you or another trusted adult must be present.
- If your child is struggling with a particular subject, and you are

not able to help them yourself, a tutor can be a good solution. Talk it over with your child's teacher first.

- Some children need help organizing their homework. Checklists, timers, and parental supervision can help overcome homework problems.

Recalled products

Make sure your child's school has up-to-date information on recalled toys and children's products. Schools, daycare providers, and parents can receive recall information by telephone, e-mail, or in the regular mail free of charge by contacting the:

**U.S. Consumer Product
Safety Commission
4330 East West Hwy
Bethesda MD 20814

1-800-638-2772

www.cpsc.gov

www.recalls.gov**

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

**Bureau of Consumer Protection
2811 Agriculture Drive
PO Box 8911
Madison WI 53708-8911**

E-MAIL: DATCPHotline@wi.gov

WEBSITE: datcp.wi.gov

(800) 422-7128

(608) 224-4976

FAX: (608) 224-4677

TTY: (608) 224-5058

(Some information taken from the US CPSC and www.usa.safekids.org and American Academy of Pediatrics "Back to School Tips")